

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Natalie Vieira and I am a former Connecticut resident. I grew up in Wolcott, attended the University of Connecticut, and lived and worked in New Haven for several years. I have deep roots in the state and still return often; all of my close family and most of my friends live in Connecticut. I care tremendously about ensuring that all Connecticut residents, regardless of their background, have what they need and deserve to thrive.

I stand in support of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

For five years, I worked for a Connecticut-based nonprofit organization that partners with home-based family child care providers to ensure that all children and families have access to safe, high-quality early care and education. Many of the child care providers, children, and families I worked with are immigrants; some of them are undocumented. All of them deserved health insurance to access needed medical care. This was never more evident than in the spring of 2020, in the early days of the pandemic, when family child care providers risked their own health and safety to keep their programs open for the children of frontline workers, many of whom are immigrants doing critically important work without access to benefits like health coverage that should be extended to all as a matter of human right.

Last year, Connecticut took the important step of expanding access to HUSKY to children ages 0-8, but we need to go further. Why should an eight-year-old qualify for coverage while a nine-year-old does not? Lack of coverage should never prevent a child from receiving the healthcare that will support their healthy growth and development as students and later, workers in this state. SB 284 moves us in the right direction by extending HUSKY access up to age eighteen. Still, our ultimate goal must be to expand coverage to all immigrants regardless of age. Children do not exist in a silo; they need healthy parents and caregivers in order to thrive.

I ask the committee to support and pass S.B. 284, and to work towards opening HUSKY access to all immigrants regardless of age. Connecticut will be a healthier and stronger state because of it.

Thank you for your time,  
Natalie Vieira